

states that he is "encouraged by assurance that the labor provisions cannot be read to require compliance with ILO conventions," we should be more than skeptical.

While we have all heard that the Peru trade agreement text improves labor and environmental standards, we fail to hear that they were added on top of the same old NAFTA and CAFTA text. The bottom line: this is another Bush NAFTA expansion.

Key unions are worried about the labor provisions. The new provisions require countries to adopt, maintain, and enforce only the terms of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

The new FTA language does not require signatories to meet the ILO conventions. That's the binding standards. The declaration is a nonbinding statement.

It is highly likely that changes to the environment and labor provisions will have no real effect on the ground.

We all know that the Bush administration has a long record of not enforcing the standards of past trade agreements. Why should they start now?

And there are so many problems with the Peru Free Trade Agreement, whether it's the privatization of Social Security, ban on anti-offshoring, or failure to protect our intellectual property rights. There are more than enough reasons to oppose the Peru FTA. Not to mention if you look at NAFTA, NAFTA has caused a worse problem here in the United States with illegal immigration. The Peru Free Trade Agreement will do the same thing, cause the illegal immigration problem to get worse.

I could go on and on about the Peru FTA. I ask my colleagues to really listen to what America is saying about these free trade agreements. I'm asking Members to vote their conscience. Oppose the Peru FTA.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY of New York addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS REPORT ON THE ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Mrs. JONES) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, it's so good to see you in the Chair, especially on this occasion as we engage in the Congressional Black Caucus message hour.

This evening it gives me great pleasure to spend some time talking about

the annual legislative conference that was this past weekend right here in Washington, DC.

I am joined this evening by the co-chair. The Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus foundation is KENDRICK MEEK, but the co-chairs of this wonderful weekend this year are my good friends G.K. BUTTERFIELD from North Carolina and my colleague and good friend DONNA CHRISTENSEN from the Virgin Islands.

So I am going to begin by yielding to my colleague and good friend from the great State of North Carolina, G.K. BUTTERFIELD.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. I want to first of all thank the gentlelady from Ohio for her leadership here in the Congress. One of the first Members that I met when I came to Washington 3 years ago was STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES. She is engaged all the time and is certainly representing the constituents of her district. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you this evening.

We have just finished the 37th Annual Legislative Conference of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

I want to delineate between the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Those are two separate entities. So often people confuse those entities, but the Congressional Black Caucus proper is simply an unofficial organization of the 43 CBC members, African American Members who are serving in the Congress who meet from time to time to discuss public policy issues. It is not a foundation; it is simply an informal gathering of Members of Congress.

By contrast, the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation is a very formal organization. It is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt foundation that has been in existence for many years. I want to start off by making that point abundantly clear.

The Congressional Black Caucus is composed of 43 members. We hear that number from time to time. That's a very important number. It has not always been 43 members. The African American representation here in Congress has evolved over the years, and now it is at its highest point in its history; 42 African Americans serve in the House. Of those 42, 40 are full voting Members of the House of Representatives. The other two have the right to vote in committees and in the Committee of the Whole, but not in the full House, because they represent the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. Hopefully one day in the not too distant future even those two Members will have a right to full participation here in the Congress.

But having 42 African Americans in the House of Representatives is significant. That is 17 percent of the House of Representatives, at least the Democrats in the House of Representatives come from the Congressional Black Caucus, and so that is very important.

So over the years, the Congressional Black Caucus has seen fit to annually

produce an annual legislative conference whereby African American leaders from all across the country can come to Washington in fellowship and interact and network with other people across the country, and then we conclude the week by having a gala or an annual dinner. We have just completed the 37th annual conference this past week, and it was a smashing success.

I want to thank all of those persons who had a hand in making it happen. KENDRICK MEEK from Miami, Dade County, Florida, is the leader of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. We used to call him a part of the 30-something club, but he has now passed that great 40-year-old mark, but he is still young and energetic and dynamic.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Are you a member of the 30-something club?

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. No, ma'am, I am not. I am a member of the 60-something.

But KENDRICK MEEK has led our organization, and we had a very, very good conference last week. I am not going to go into all the details, I am sure my colleague, DONNA CHRISTENSEN, who was also my cochair last week may give you details about it, but it was a wonderful week.

We had brain trust on just about every topic that you can imagine. We had a gospel extravaganza, and one of my choirs from North Carolina came to Washington and really, really had a magnificent showing in that extravaganza. Then we had a prayer breakfast. We are very close to prayer in the Congressional Black Caucus, because we know it has been our faith that has brought us thus far along the way. Then we concluded on Saturday night with our gala. I don't know how many thousand people were at that dinner.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. More than 3,000.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Yes. There were more, more like 4, 5,000 people in attendance at the dinner, and it was a great success.

I want to thank all of those persons who had a hand in making the week the success that it was, particularly Dr. Elsie Scott and the staff of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation.

You know, Congresswoman, I say in speeches all the time and I will say here on the House floor today, you know, we get credit for a lot of things that we really don't deserve, Members of Congress. We cut the ribbons and take pictures and sit in meetings and engage in unnecessary debate sometimes, but it is the staff that does the heavy lifting and gets the job done. So kudos to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation staff.

Let me conclude by saying that since 1868 there has only been 122 African Americans who have served in the United States Congress. That is an actual statistic. Our research shows that 19 African Americans served in the House of Representatives during the Reconstruction. Four of those were

from my district that I now represent, which is the northeastern corner of North Carolina. Eight of those were from South Carolina, which is the district that my good friend, the majority whip of this House, Congressman JIM CLYBURN, represents. But we have only had 122 African Americans to serve in this body. We have come a long way to have 42 African Americans serving in the House and one in the Senate.

We have a lot of work to do, and I am going to close by simply saying that we had a good week and a very successful week. I know it's self-serving for me to say this, Congresswoman, but I think it's the best conference that we have had in our 37 years. So many people deserve the credit.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Before you leave, I want to congratulate you on your choice of prayer breakfast speaker. Dr. Clifford Jones out of North Carolina was a wonderful speaker, and his theme, "Somebody Pray for Me," I think hit right home with all of us, and we had a wonderful, wonderful time in praise and worship Saturday morning. You would have actually thought we turned the convention center into a church on Saturday morning. It was a wonderful experience.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. We had a southern missionary Baptist preacher who came to Washington and delivered a powerful sermon. When I first suggested Dr. Jones' name a few months ago, a few people were skeptical because they had not heard of him before. When they came up with their name, I had not heard of their name before.

So I thought it was time to have a southern minister. Dr. Clifford Jones did a wonderful job, as did Rev. William Barber from Goldsboro, North Carolina, who delivered the prayer for the Nation. Dr. Barber is also the State president of the NAACP in North Carolina, and it was just a wonderful occasion. You would have had to have been there to really appreciate it, and hopefully persons who didn't come this year may see fit to come next year.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I wasn't part of the choice, but I knew a minister named Jones had to be a really good person. Thank you so much for the choice.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Thank you, staff. Thank you all of you who had a hand in making this happen, including the chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus itself. I failed to mention the name of CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK. Congresswoman KILPATRICK is leader of the Congressional Black Caucus, and that's a tough job, leading 43 diverse politicians. But she reconciles all of our differences, all of our views and leads the Black Caucus with great distinction. Thank you as well to Congresswoman KILPATRICK.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. It gives me great pleasure to yield time to my colleague and good friend, Congresswoman DONNA CHRISTENSEN. She cochairs the brain trust for the Congressional Black Caucus. She represents the Virgin Is-

lands. She has done a great job and always been a great friend since I have been in the Congress. This year, along with G.K. BUTTERFIELD, she cochaired the annual conference for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, "Unleashing Our Power."

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Congresswoman TUBBS JONES, it's a pleasure to be back with you on the floor this evening. We were here together last week discussing SCHIP and the situation in Jena with the Jena 6 high school students, which was also a part of our discussion, a very integral part of our discussion at the annual legislative conference.

We were very fortunate that while we were there, Mychal Bell was released from prison, and we were able to have the lead attorney, Lewis Scott, come up and join us for a session.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Absolutely.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. But this was our 37th Annual Legislative Conference, and our theme, as you heard, was "Unleashing Our Power." That is also exactly what we here in the CBC and our constituents across the country intend to do going forward, unleash our power.

I also want to join my cochair in thanking the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, KENDRICK MEEK, for his strong and visionary leadership of the foundation and of the conference, and to thank our CBC chairwoman, the Honorable CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK, for her stellar guidance. As we have come into the majority, she has coalesced and directed our power to influence the product of what I think will be a historic 110th Congress.

I also, as you heard just a few minutes ago, had a great partner in my cochair, Congressman G.K. BUTTERFIELD of North Carolina, whose input, vision and hard work really helped to make this week a successful and momentous one as it was.

Of course, as he said too, the ALC could not have been successful without the work of our staff, his staff and my staff and the staff of the foundation under the excellent and skilled leadership of Dr. Elsie Scott, its president.

As this year's cochair, it was a special pleasure for me to welcome Generation Now and other Virgin Islanders, including Neville Peter, who sang at the prayer breakfast.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. He was excellent. He was excellent. Wow.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Both singers were great, but it was really inspiring. We were really pleased he was able to join us.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Why don't you tell us a little bit about Neville Peter? Some people across the Nation may not know about him.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. He is a young man, born in my district in the U.S. Virgin Islands. He started his musical career very early, at about 5, mostly in the piano and one other instrument. But at about 12, he pretty much lost all

of his sight. He became blind at about age 12.

That didn't stop him, though. He went on to college at the University of Miami and studied music there, actually specializing in jazz and some other kinds of music. But in the recent years, he has turned his talent to the service of the Lord, and he has been a gospel singer, writer. He actually performed one of his original compositions, which, as he said, was a testimony of his own life and finding God; it was personal. Now it's personal.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Yes, now it's personal. We remarked, as we were sitting at the table listening to him, that his look was much like a Stevie Wonder look with the braids. When he turned to the side, the profile was much like Stevie Wonder.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Yes, he has a great voice and a great talent. We look for him to go to great places in the future.

So we have him and we have the Generation Now, and, of course, many of us in the Congressional Black Caucus also had our emerging leaders come up from our district that we sponsored; mine, attorney Mark Hodge and Natalie Humphries, also of Generation Now, the last person. So that was exciting.

Our opening session, of course, featured our Chairs, including my colleague here, Mrs. STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, but also Chairman RANGEL, Chairman CONYERS, Chairman THOMPSON, and of course, our whip, JIM CLYBURN. That was a very, I think, powerful way to start off a conference, a weekend that was all about power.

It wasn't only about power in the Congress, but it was about a power in our community that is still really untapped and unleashed. We could really be agents of change for our community and our country if we were to really come together and use the power that is ours.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I am with you.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. I wanted to focus the rest of my remarks on the town hall, though, and on the health sessions that I was a part of. There were many health sessions. There were many sessions, period, on a number of issues, and all very informative.

The town hall, first, was a real powerful discussion on ways to eliminate or reduce the factors that lead so many black men and now, increasingly, black women into prison. We called it "Disrupting the Prison Pipeline" because we wanted to focus on positive action to really stop what was happening over the years.

Too, our session was attended by, I think, over 1,000 people who were at that town hall that morning. And we discussed the disparities in education, health, including mental health and substance abuse, how poverty and unemployment in the criminal justice system, the disparities in those areas create a pathway to incarceration rather than college for so many in the African-American community.

We had wonderful speakers. We had Reggie Weaver, the president of the National Education Association; Dr. Marian Wright Edelman, the president of the Children's Defense Fund; Dr. Beny Primm was a drug addiction expert from New York; Dr. Debra Prothrow Stith, a public health expert who focuses on violence prevention; attorney Rhonda Stewart from North Carolina, an expert on child and family judicial issues; Janks Morton, who is a writer in D.C. representing the media; and several ex-offenders who have made a dramatic turnaround in their lives.

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We want to thank them, as well as our moderator, Leon Harris, and the Members of Congress who participated; Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, who chairs the Crime Subcommittee of the Judiciary and has turned that into, has begun to focus that committee on prevention, which we have long looked forward to doing; DANNY DAVIS, who heads a subcommittee himself on health under the Government Reform Committee. But primarily he was there as the leader of the State of the Black Male Initiative that the CBC and the CBC Foundation have been working on and, of course, Chairman RANGEL, who brought the economic opportunity piece to that discussion. They brought their expertise, they brought the work that they're engaged in, both inside and out of Congress to help disrupt the prison pipeline.

What's clear is that there's too many communities where a young black male in this country has no alternative opportunities, nor is he provided with adequate opportunities to be able to succeed on the path to college. And the two unfortunate recent examples are the Jena high school students and Genarlo Wilson who is still in prison in Georgia. What we will do from here, though, Madam Speaker and colleagues, is to issue a report that incorporates the date, the key points of the discussion, and legislative recommendations, which would be a blueprint for the Congressional Black Caucus, as well as other elected leadership on State and local levels.

What we've heard from our panelists and the audience was a compelling call to action to indeed disrupt that prison pipeline.

The first health session, which I co-chair every year with Congresswoman BARBARA LEE on HIV and AIDS, global HIV and AIDS focus on the growing role and the influence of the faith community in combating the HIV/AIDS crisis in the African American community. Ten years ago we called for a state of emergency and a minority AIDS initiative for our community and other communities of color. This administration has taken it far away from the original intent of building the local capacity in our communities to address this epidemic. And the consensus in that conference was that we need a national plan, as we discussed

with the Black AIDS Institute on the Hill last week; and it's time to reissue that call for the state of emergency and reclaim our minority AIDS initiative.

Also, on Thursday afternoon there was a great discussion on bringing corporate, State, and union leaders into the disparity elimination partnership. With the ongoing need for corporations to provide health care and the extreme pressures of its rising costs, they will be looking for ways to cut those costs. The health coverage will continue to be a major cause of contention as unions negotiate contracts, and States are beginning to take coverage for all of their residents into their own hands.

We called on business, union and State leaders, we called them together for this dialogue because we want to make sure that as all of this begins to take some kind of shape into a health care reform initiative, that closing the gaps in health care and in health status that's faced by racial and ethnic minorities and rural residents in this country, that those issues would be at the center of that reform; and we intend for that to be an ongoing dialogue.

The last session that I'm going to mention is the Friday session on demanding opportunity and justice for African American health care providers. It spoke to challenges that are almost as disturbing as those we discussed in the prison pipeline discussion. Our keynote speaker, Dr. Sullivan, gave us an update on the still low representation of African Americans and other minorities in health professions schools and in practice, far below our representation in the Nation and woefully inadequate to meet the needs of our diverse society. We heard from hospital administrators, doctors, dentists and others, including students, about the barriers to getting into the health profession school and staying there. Those stories were bad enough. But there was more. We then heard from African American doctors and other health providers, those in practice, about the difficulties they face in staying in practice, given exclusions from certain facilities, faculties and organizations, unfair investigations and sanctions that hold them to a far higher standard than other providers, and also disparities in reimbursement.

What we heard signals a looming crisis that must be prevented if we are ever to eliminate health disparities, if we're ever to improve health care for everyone in this country, and if we're ever to stop the skyrocketing rise in health care costs. Those are just three of the many outstanding issue forums and brain trusts that informed, inspired, and invoked action on the part of the black community.

As I close, I want to thank all of my CBC colleagues, including you, Madam Speaker, for your support. Because of your hard work and that of your staff, we had one of the best annual legislative conferences ever and I want to

thank all of the speakers, the exhibitors, and all who attended from all over the country, and even some from beyond and outside of our country, from the Caribbean, from Africa and other areas of the world. Because of the input that you brought, and the support that you gave to the conference, we, as a community, stand more ready than ever to unleash our power.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Madam Chair, DONNA CHRISTENSEN, the Delegate from the Virgin Islands, one of the co-chairs for the ALC Conference.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to yield 5 minutes to my colleague and good friend, DIANE WATSON from California, our former ambassador to Micronesia.

Ms. WATSON. Thank you, Congresswoman STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES; and thank you, Madam Speaker.

I want to congratulate Congressman MEEK, Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK for putting together a most excellent Congressional Black Caucus annual legislative week. The event was very well attended, and the many issue forums were informative and enlightening.

I held three issue forums, one on African American entrepreneurship in South Africa, and one on African American celebrities and their too often unreported commitment to social issues.

And my third panel, entitled "Finding Justice for the Black Cherokee Indian Freedmen," looked at the current Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma's efforts to expel its black Cherokee citizens. I was pleased to have a number of Cherokee citizens, including Joe Byrd, the former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Jon Velie, attorney for the Freedmen, and Marilyn Vann, president of the Freedmen Descendants Association.

In the year 2000, the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma attempted to disenfranchise its Freedmen descendants. The circumstances were nearly identical to the current efforts of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma to rid itself of descendants of the Freedmen who are rightfully citizens of Cherokee Nation. The Bureau of Indian Affairs took a proactive stance against the Seminoles, cutting off their funding for nearly 2 years and also suspending their franchise to conduct gaming.

Interestingly, the Bureau of Indian Affairs first declared the Cherokee Freedmen situation identical to that of the Seminole Freedmen. Then the bureau did a 180-degree flip flop, taking a hands-off approach to Cherokee Freedmen. The BIA chose to shirk its fiduciary responsibility, even as the Freedmen's rights were obviously being trampled on by the Cherokee leadership.

In March of 2007, the Cherokee Nation held an election to expel the Cherokee Freedmen, in violation of the 1866 treaty which granted full citizenship

rights to Cherokee Freedmen shortly after the Civil War. That is when the plight of the Cherokee Freedmen first came to my attention.

I immediately wrote a letter to Assistant Secretary Artman of the Bureau of Indian Affairs requesting an interpretation of the vote. The letter was signed by 25 of my congressional colleagues. The response I received from Secretary Artman almost a month later was unsatisfactory. In effect, the Secretary said that the bureau had not taken any administrative action and would continue its careful evaluation of all facets of this matter. In effect, I was told that the BIA would continue to monitor a situation that didn't need further monitoring, but immediate action.

It is only when I discovered that the BIA would not move proactively, that it would not forcibly and vigorously stand up for and protect the rights of Cherokee Freedmen as it had done for the Seminole Freedmen, I introduced H.R. 2824 to sever the United States relations with the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma until such time that it restores full citizenship rights to Cherokee Freedmen.

My legislation has been characterized by Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma as a termination bill, which is blatantly false. There is not one sentence in the legislation that addresses terminating the Cherokee Nation's Federal recognition status.

The Cherokee Nation has made the argument that Congress should not intervene until the courts have resolved the matter. It made this point the center piece of its public relations campaign to disenfranchise the Freedmen descendants. But the past actions of the Cherokee Nation belie its commitment to the rule of law. After the Cherokee Nation's tribal courts ruled in favor of Lucy Allen, a Freedmen descendant who sued for citizenship, the Cherokee Nation's leadership chose to dissolve the court and packed the newly constituted court with cronies who proceeded to approve a referendum to disenfranchise the Freedmen.

The Cherokee Nation's leadership states that funding cuts will hurt many Cherokees who depend on Federal funding. This past Friday, coinciding with the day of my issue forum, the Cherokee Nation took out a full page ad in Roll Call and in the Hill making this claim. What the Cherokee Nation doesn't tell you is that it has already spent \$2.7 million or more lobbying against Freedmen and that the Cherokee Tribal Council recently debated allocating \$4 million to lobby against the Freedmen. What they don't tell you is that a lot of this money has gone and will go to pay for services of high-priced public relations firms. It's too bad that the Cherokee Nation will not use its money to help those in its tribe who really need assistance, but instead will use millions of dollars to launch a hateful and vitriolic attack against African descendants of the

Cherokee Nation who form a minority of its, there are only 2,800, they're a minority among its 270,000 thousand Members.

And finally, my legislation was not an attack on Indian sovereignty or the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma's sovereignty.

The Cherokee Nation receives roughly \$300 million a year from the Federal Government. It also conducts highly lucrative gaming operations with a Federal gaming charter. The sovereign right to discriminate with our taxpayers' dollars is not a right at all. It's illegal.

The Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma argues that it should be treated like other tribes and have the exclusive right to determine its citizenship. Because the Cherokees signed a treaty with the Confederate States of America and fought against the United States to defend slavery, the conditions of the treaty of 1866 and reconstituting the relationship with the United States was that the former slaves and their descendants, called the Freedmen, would be citizens with full rights. My legislation only seeks redress for the Cherokee Nation for the restoration of their treaty rights that entitle them to citizenship, to vote, to hold office and to have equal rights with other Cherokee citizens.

Madam Speaker and Representative STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, I appreciate the time you have given us, and I think we were very successful this weekend in gathering information and enlightening our public who attended from across the country and around our Nation. Thank you very much.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of this Special Order today, the annual legislative conference of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Ohio?

There was no objection.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. At this time it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to yield 5 minutes to my colleague and good friend from the great State of North Carolina, the immediate past Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, Mr. MEL WATT.

Mr. WATT. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank my colleague, STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES from Ohio, for yielding time. I don't think it will take me 5 minutes to do this, but I did want to spend a little bit of time talking about the annual legislative conference that was conducted by the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation this past weekend.

I heard the comments of my colleague from California, Ms. DIANE WATSON, and I was fortunate to be able to sit in on one of her issues forums related to the Cherokee Freedmen, and I

thought it was a very balanced and productive session, and very informative.

I've been privileged to be a part of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual legislative weekend for all 15 years that I have served in Congress. And I would have to say that the first 13 of those years I did my piece of the conference by conducting a discussion and issues forum on the Voting Rights Act, access to the vote, and I participated in various issues related to the Judiciary Committee. But last year and the year before last, I was honored to serve as the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I took a different perspective during those 2 years because it gave me an opportunity, as Chair of the caucus, not only to do my own issues forum, but it was part of, I viewed it as part of my responsibility to drop in on all of the issues forums and brain trust discussions that were going on.

And I can tell you firsthand that there was nowhere in the world that there were more thoughtful provocative discussions going on about the state of black America, our role in the United States, our role in education, justice, our role internationally, than take place at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual legislative conference.

That is the place to be to discuss the issues that impact our community, and I saw it firsthand, from issues related to the hip hop generation to the confidence of our African American youth, to the prison pipeline that, unfortunately, has been created, to the disparities that exist in health care and education and even in our international foreign policy.

So I'm honored to have been able to have viewed the weekend from a different perspective for the last 2 years.

But I will tell you, Madam Speaker, and my colleague, Representative TUBBS JONES, that I was honored to get back to being able to do just my thing again this year. And we had a delightful discussion about the Voting Rights Act in my issues forum.

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Last year we had just passed the 25-year reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, and so we took that year to kind of pat ourselves on the back and talk about what we had just accomplished. But we knew the onslaught would be coming immediately. And within that 1-year period, there has been a concerted effort, litigation has been filed, which is a direct frontal attack on the Voting Rights Act and its reauthorization.

So the first part of my issues related to that legal attack, which had just been argued in a court of appeals about 2 weeks ago, and I had the lawyer from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund there at my brain trust to talk about that attack and its likelihood for success. And I'm happy to report that we do not believe it is a serious attack, although there will certainly be others to come.

That presentation was followed by a presentation by Donna Brazile on the various methods that have been used throughout the country to discourage minority participation in the voting process and what we plan to do about it in the 2007 election and, more importantly perhaps, in the 2008 Presidential election cycle, some of the strategies that we plan to follow to combat those efforts to diminish and reduce minority participation in the voting process.

And then our third panelist was a director of a board of elections in Florida who talked about the desirability of creating a paper trail so that people who do show up and vote at the polls can reliably be certain that their vote will be counted and properly assessed.

So we just had three panelists. They did outstanding jobs. We had ample time for discussion and participation by the attendees at the conference and at our issues forum. It was a delightful experience and one that I look forward to being around next year at this time to replicate.

I again applaud you for convening this Special Order tonight to allow us the opportunity to talk about not only the fun things that happened at the foundation's annual legislative conference but, more importantly, the wonderful substantive discussions that take place around every issue that impact our community.

With that I will thank our convener this evening.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I had a recent discussion with our colleague KERTH ELLISON from Minnesota, and he was telling me that in the seventh circuit that it had been granted to go to the Supreme Court on a voter ID. That will be an interesting case to watch as it goes forward as well.

Mr. WATT. We did talk about that, and we are watching that case very carefully, as well as another case out of North Carolina, which is an attack on whether the Voting Rights Act protects congressional districts that are not majority minority, such as the one I represent, which is only 40 percent or so African American, and the ones that are represented by most of the members of the Congressional Black Caucus today.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership on getting the Voting Rights Act reauthorized, Congressman MEL WATT of North Carolina.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to yield to my colleague and good friend, a former judge from the great State of Texas, Congresswoman SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Madam Speaker, let me thank my distinguished colleague and friend, chairwoman of the Ethics Committee from Ohio STEPHANIE TUBBS JONES, for more than this one night. I think that we are back in the saddle again, and I applaud the fact that the Congressional Black Caucus, the conscience of the Congress, is now reporting the ions and pages

and, if you will, thousands upon thousands of items that we work on and solve on a daily basis here in the United States Congress. So I want to thank her for guiding this for a period of time, and I want to then acknowledge the chairpersons of the 37th Annual Legislative Conference, the Honorable DONNA CHRISTENSEN and G.K. BUTTERFIELD, who did an outstanding job. And as well might I acknowledge and thank, and I know that he will be speaking soon, the chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Chairman KENDRICK MEEK, and thank him for his leadership and also for the opportunity to now journey on the foundation board as a new member. As I am a new member of the foundation board, I am delighted to be able to collaborate with him on some of the many, many issues that the board will tackle.

Success; inspirational; exciting; fun; learned; and, of course, message giving. That was the 37th annual legislative session that we just finished here in Washington, D.C.

Allow me to acknowledge the importance of the Voting Rights session that MEL WATT and I, having served on the Judiciary Committee, worked on as we moved to reauthorize the Voting Rights legislation in the last session.

And just to bring to the attention of my colleagues, the reason why that is so important is because it seems that race again is becoming a dividing issue in America. And I just want to remind my colleagues, or maybe bring it to your attention, I am going to sort of merge it into the review of the particular sessions that I had, but I just want to announce to my colleagues that Ward Connelly has managed to get the question of affirmative action on the ballot of nine States. My understanding is that that question which revolves around race will be on the Presidential-year elections. It is my understanding that it will be on the ballot in November of 2008. I am going to investigate that issue, but I wanted to just bring that to the table because a number of our sessions had to do with trying to grapple with this question of race. And certainly the Voting Rights Act and the interpretations that the Supreme Court will make on additional cases involving race really emphasize that.

And I must say that I enjoyed co-hosting a series of sessions with BOBBY SCOTT. There was a session that, although I was detained, I was able to get in for a brief moment, but I want to compliment him and acknowledge that one of the aspects that was spoken about was the recent decision dealing with race in schools on the Supreme Court. So you can imagine if there are ballot issues dealing with affirmative action, it just converges on a number of these issues. And that session really emphasized the wrongness of the decision as it relates to the results, meaning that Brown versus Board of Education might be challenged under that

decision. Something for us to be concerned about.

So I enjoyed participating in that one and thought it was a very important, instructive session, as well as cochairing the child welfare section with DANNY DAVIS. And the one point I want to mention that came out of that that really cries out for legislation is the fact that foster children age out of protection, age out of a home at age 18. And for those of us who have children that know that we are still mothering them at 21, 22, 23, 24, and they have a home, our children can come back to a home or have a roof over their head that we may have, but foster children get out of the system. There is no obligation to provide them with housing or schooling or anything. What a tragedy, which is why you see that many foster children are homeless, many foster children can't finish college. They get no stipend, and it is a crisis. And it was an outstanding series with Historically Black Colleges.

Let me then indicate that the series that I had involved the energy brain trust, which was historic. And let me quickly say that we had representatives from Shell and CAMAC energy and the CEO of CITGO; from Venezuela, the Venezuelan ambassador; the ambassador from Algeria; Milton Scott, who owns a very important African American energy company; Steve Hightower, African American, owner of an energy company; George Person; Lisa Jackson; Gary Heminger; Hugh Depland from BP; Gary from Marathon; Frank Stewart from the American Association of Blacks in Energy; Willie Trotty. And the key element, high gasoline prices and high utility costs, building bridges. We have a commitment to convene the energy brain trust at the OTC, the Offshore Technology Conference, in Houston, but the main thing we have a commitment to is getting African Americans in the ownership wealth part of energy and making sure that there are African Americans in the corporate aspects of these major Fortune 500 companies and, as well, increasing more ownership.

□ 2030

Lastly, we did a provocative session on hip hop, "The Culture of a People, the Language of a People," and it actually got people talking. Julianne Malveaux, the president of Bennett College. Azim Rashid, senior VP of operations at Warner Music. J. Xavier, 350-time performer. 15-year-old clean hip hop artist. An Tun Muhammad, the president of The Real Hip Hop Network. Asha Jennings, Igniting Media Accountability. Madhatter of the Box Station in Houston, and JMAC. And then Reverend Ben Chavis and Charles LeBoef.

Let me conclude by saying that we opened up the door of communication to understand hip hop from both perspectives in art, but also accountability. I look forward to continuing those sessions.

But more importantly let me thank the convener, because we were able to say it was vital, it was important, and there was so much learning going on. Now we're going forward with the legislative initiative for the CBC legislative weekend.

I yield back to the distinguished gentlelady. Thank you for the time.

The issue of energy is one of the most important national security issues which face our nation due to our increasing dependence on foreign sources of energy, often times from volatile parts of the world. My braintrust seeks to highlight and remedy the lack of adequate outreach to and participation by the African American community in America's energy industry, which is exacerbated by the inherent barriers present in the energy industry to African American students, workers, entrepreneurs, and investors along with the disparate impact the energy industry has on minority populations, consumers and neighborhoods, both in terms of prices and environmental justice.

There is no issue more integral to our nation's economic and national security than energy independence. This Energy Braintrust, which is comprised of some of the most prominent members of America's energy industry, is designed to be a clarion call to action, in order to build bridges and synergies between the African-American community and America's energy industry.

The purpose of this Braintrust will not only be the discussion of, but more importantly, the transformation of dialogue into action and legislation to address and bolster the relationships between the energy industry and African American consumers, entrepreneurs, investors, workers, and students. My hope and expectation is that six months from now each of today's presenters will join me to collectively and individually issue a plan of benchmarks, goals, and pathways to build concrete and coherent bridges and synergies between the African American community and America's energy industry. Moreover, part of this plan will be a formal mechanism such as a progress report to measure how each of today's prominent panelists and the companies they represent implement and achieve the benchmarks they helped to develop. This will ensure that we transform today's substantive discussion into pragmatic action.

Energy is the lifeblood of every economy, especially ours. Producing more of it leads to more good jobs, cheaper goods, lower fuel prices, and greater economic and national security. However, the U.S. is more than 60 percent dependent on foreign sources of energy, twice as dependent today as we were just 30 years ago. America's growing and dangerous energy dependence has resulted in the loss of hundreds of thousands of good American jobs, skyrocketing consumer prices, and vulnerabilities in our national security.

Energy imports now make up one-third of America's trade deficit. America must improve the supply-demand imbalance, lower consumer prices, and increase jobs by producing more of its own energy resources. With my district of Houston being the energy capital of the world, the energy industry in Houston exemplifies the stakeholders who must be instrumental in devising a pragmatic strategy for resolving our national energy crisis.

At this point in history, the energy industry is at a critical turning point where we can be-

come active agents of change in our collective futures. America's dependence of foreign oil has led us to precarious position in terms of foreign policy and national security, while the youth of our nation have not received sufficient means to move to us a new direction.

Because I represent the city of Houston, the energy capital of the world, I realize that many oil and gas companies provide many jobs for many of my constituents and serve a valuable need. The energy industry in Houston exemplifies the stakeholders who must be instrumental in devising a pragmatic strategy for resolving our national energy crisis. It is crucial that while seeking solutions to secure more energy independence within this country, we strike a balance that will still support an environment for continued growth in the oil and gas industry, which I might add, creates millions of jobs across the entire country.

We have many more miles to go before we achieve energy independence. Consequently, I am willing, able, and eager to continue working with Houston's and our nation's energy industry to ensure that we are moving expeditiously on the path to crafting an environmentally sound and economically viable energy policy. Furthermore, I think it is imperative that part of this policy includes increased involvement by small, minority and women owned businesses, and independent energy companies in this process because they represent some of the hard working Americans and Houstonians who are on the forefront of energy efficient strategies to achieving energy independence.

I will conclude by also emphasizing that renewable and alternate sources of energy must be part of our energy future in order to achieve energy independence. Replacing oil imports with domestic alternatives such as traditional and cellulosic ethanol can not only help reduce the \$180 billion that oil contributes to our annual trade deficit, it can end our addiction to foreign oil. According to the Department of Agriculture, biomass can displace 30 percent of our Nation's petroleum consumption.

Along with traditional production of ethanol from corn, cellulosic ethanol can be produced domestically from a variety of feedstocks, including switchgrass, corn stalks and municipal solid wastes, which are available throughout our nation. Cellulosic ethanol also relies on its own byproducts to fuel the refining process, yielding a positive energy balance. Whereas the potential production of traditional corn-based ethanol is about 10 billion gallons per year, the potential production of cellulosic ethanol is estimated to be 60 billion gallons per year.

I will close by emphasizing that we must be balanced and prudent in our approach to address our energy needs. By ensuring access to the African-American community and investing in renewable energy, I believe we can be partners with the responsible members of America's energy producing community present today to achieve our collective goal of reaching energy independence and increased inclusion of the African-American community.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES FORUM: HIP HOP: THE CULTURE OF A PEOPLE

The Annual Legislative Conference is an opportunity for us to discuss and engage with some of the difficult issues that face us as a community and as a nation. This year, it was my honor and pleasure to host a Children's

Issues Forum entitled "The Language of Hip Hop: The Culture of a People." This timely and thought-provoking discussion and examination of the impact, both positive and negative, of hip hop on our community featured panelists from the hip hop industry, as well as activists and academics.

As a Member of the Congressional Black Caucus, Chairwoman of the Congressional Children's Caucus, and most importantly a mother, it is my priority to address issues relating to the health and well-being of African American youth in this country. I recognize that Hip Hop culture has had a tremendous influence on the artistic and musical expression of America's youth today. However, many view the culture of Hip Hop as a negative and provocative phenomenon due to some of the negative images and harsh lyrics that some artists use to express themselves. I believe that before we condemn Hip Hop, we must first try to understand it. The Children's Braintrust sought to reach such understanding.

Throughout history, music originating from America's Black communities has always had an accompanying subculture reflective of the political, social and economic conditions of the time. Rap is no different. The history of our music often exemplifies a deeper reflection of the goings on in society—from Billie Holiday's solemn song characterizing those who were lynched as "Strange Fruit" to Nina Simone's musical commentary in "Mississippi G—D—" expressing her disdain for the rampant killings in the South, to Tupac's expression of sincere compassion for poor black women, whom he urged to "keep your head up" despite the fact that society has turned its back on you.

Hip hop is the culture from which rap emerged. Hip hop is a lifestyle with its own language, style of dress, music and mind set that is continuously evolving. We have seen hip hop go from competitive freestyling to breakdancing battles to East Coast-West Coast rivalry. Surely, we lost two extremely talented individuals in Tupac and Biggie, much too soon. We all know their lives did not have to end so violently. But knowing this, we must ask ourselves, why does the violence continue to take so many of our youth?

My Children's Issues Forum was an opportunity to talk with each other, rather than at each other. Panelists and participants came together to discuss solutions, and to look for a way forward that embraces the hip hop artists in their quest to fulfill their dreams but rejects the lethal language that often lends itself to less than desirable outcomes for our children. More and more, we see some of the negative messages affecting the way young people make decisions about engaging in sexual activity, drug use and using violence as a means to resolve conflict. The self esteem and desire of many young listeners to achieve greatness are being deflated by stereotypes and explicit lyrics in some Hip Hop lyrics.

While I uphold America's fundamental right to freedom of speech and believe that artists have a right to creative expression, a middle ground needs to be sought in order to allow artists to create music without demeaning and degrading others. It is difficult to progress as a community if we never take the time to carefully dissect the influence of Hip Hop on our children.

During my forum, panelists examined whether Hip Hop language is culture, creativity

or crisis, and explored the "Stop Snitchin" phenomenon that has had a negative impact on communities across the nation. This important Issues Forum was a substantial first step toward reaching a solution. The ALC is about fostering positive and creative change, and the Children's Braintrust made great strides toward making our communities safer for our children.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. It gives me great pleasure at this time to yield 3 minutes to the Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and my great friend and son in the House of Representatives,

Congressman KENDRICK MEEK, from the great State of Florida, Miami, Florida.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so much, Madam Chair. And thank you, Ms. LEE, for saying thank you and showing your appreciation.

I know we have some Members that want to speak, and Madam Chair, I'm going to have to leave the floor soon, so I just want to mention two or three things.

One, I want to thank those great Americans that participated in our conference. And I think that some of the brain trusts that were held, from what I'm hearing from e-mails and telephone calls, were some of the best that we've had. That means hats off to those that put on those brain trusts and issue forums; that means one of the 43 members of the Congressional Black Caucus, individually they were able to do it.

And we were also able to shed light on "Unleashing Our Power." It wasn't just a title of members of the Congressional Black Caucus. It was for those participants, black, white, male and female, that attended the conference, to leave empowered to go back to their State, back to their local community, and even in their own home, and unleash their power as it relates to education, health care, so on and so on.

One thing that I can tell you that was very, very good this year, and we were able to work very hard, is making a lot of young people feel welcome with our Emerging Leaders Initiative. Our apprenticeship program has been a really successful program. We had a lot of people that participated. We had high school students that participated; we had college and recent graduates that came to this conference. And I look forward, Madam Chair, to future years where we can be able to continue to have a successful weekend. This was obviously a large fund-raiser for our scholarship program, for our internship program. These are kids that wouldn't ordinarily have an opportunity to be a part of anything here in Washington, D.C., to serve as interns in Members' offices or committees.

So everything happened the way that it should. There are always things that we can work on to make it better next year. But as it relates to the substance, Madam Chair, I am so pleased that people walked away with more knowledge than when they walked in and were inspired by what they heard. And I took

the opportunity to go into Mr. PAYNE's Africa brain trust. Very powerful. He had heads of state come in to address people who needed to know more about the African countries that are there.

So with that, Madam Chair, thank you. I want to thank you. We co-sponsored the ALC a couple of years ago together, co-chaired it. I want to thank you for your leadership, and thank you for hosting this hour.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. I thank you, Mr. Chair. It is always great working with you.

At this time, I would like to yield 4 minutes to my colleague and good friend from the great State of Virginia, Congressman BOBBY SCOTT, who has been a leader in and around so many issues. It is great to yield to you.

Mr. SCOTT of Virginia. I would like to thank the lady from Ohio for convening this Special Order so that we can talk about the great weekend that we had.

The gentleman from Florida, KENDRICK MEEK, did a tremendous job as chairman of the foundation. CAROLYN CHEEKS KILPATRICK from Michigan did a great job as chairman of the caucus; DONNA CHRISTENSEN from the Virgin Islands and G.K. BUTTERFIELD of North Carolina leading the legislative weekend.

We had dozens of important legislative seminars, foreign affairs, armed services and veterans, transportation, health care, education, housing, social services, financial issues, civil rights, voting rights. Every aspect of legislation that you can imagine, we had the nationally recognized experts. They were open to the public, the public had an opportunity for questions and answers and input. These were great workshops. I participated in four of them. The town hall forum entitled "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline" that talked about the unfortunate situation where so many of our young people start off and gradually, slowly but surely, get in trouble, drop out of school and end up in prison, and how with appropriate investments, strategic investments we can change that pipeline to a cradle-to-college pipeline, which is so much better for humanity, so much better for our communities, and that we could do that in a cost effective way.

I participated in a budget forum where we had budget experts talk about the fact that in 1993 we began eliminating the deficit. By the year 2000 we had gone into surplus. And, in fact, in 2001, we had a projected \$5.5 trillion surplus over 10 years, and how, unfortunately, over the last few years we have converted that \$5.5 trillion surplus to a \$3 trillion deficit, a swing of \$8.5 trillion. And how, with appropriate changes and some of the changes we're trying to make in Congress today, we can change that back to where we have the surplus and save Social Security, invest in health care, education and other important investments.

We had a great workshop on education with the education brain trust. We had one session on desegregation of schools and how, notwithstanding the Seattle and Louisville cases, we can still, with a little hard work, make sure those schools are desegregated.

We focused on the importance of early childhood education and the elementary and secondary education and Higher Education Act. We were able to make sure that we invested appropriately in education to make sure that we have a better community.

We also had another workshop on the judiciary, juvenile justice and the importance of making the choice between reducing crime and playing politics. We need to make sure that we reduce crime. You were very active in law school admissions, to make sure that law schools' admissions policy was not discriminatory.

Great workshops, judiciary, education, budget. The other important workshops. It was a great educational weekend.

Madam Chair, I would like to thank you for your hard work and leadership and also the ability to bring us together so that we could discuss the great work that was done over the weekend.

Thank you very much, and I yield back.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you to the gentleman from Virginia for his comments.

It gives me great pleasure at this time to have the opportunity to yield 3½ minutes to my colleague and good friend from the great State of New Jersey, who serves on the International Relations Committee and is just a leader in the international arena, my colleague and good friend, DONALD PAYNE.

Mr. PAYNE. Let me thank you again for your great work, Congresswoman JONES, she does a fantastic job, and for all of the leaders that you have heard mentioned. And I would like to commend Dr. Elsie Scott for really bringing the foundation forward. Of course, our chairperson MEEKS and KILPATRICK and G.K. BUTTERFIELD and CHRISTENSEN.

Let me also commend our speaker pro tempore this evening for the great work that YVETTE CLARKE, a new Member from Brooklyn, who has come into this House and has brought vitality and excitement. And we know that she will do an outstanding job as she moves that district forward. It's a great pleasure to have you with us.

Let me just say that I dealt with three areas, BOBBY SCOTT, DANNY DAVIS and our brain trust on education. Then I had the Head Start part. Then we had two other workshops and brain trusts, one, "We Don't Do February." And that is about integrating African American history into the regular curriculum so that when we hear about Patrick Henry and Nathan Hale, we will hear about Crispus Attucks and Peter Salem. When we hear about the Rough Riders, we will know about the

Buffalo Soldiers. So the Amistad Committee of New Jersey is integrating African history into the regular textbooks.

Then, of course, as you all know, we deal with the Africa brain trust, the theme, "The New Africa: Opportunities and Challenges." President Wade of Senegal and former President Obasanjo of Nigeria, and Under Secretary Henrietta Fore, Ambassador Ali, AU Ambassador to the U.S. And we had Dr. Adasena, who was representing Kofi Annan's new group on the "Greening of Africa." And Ambassador Lyman, former Ambassador from the U.S. to South Africa and Nigeria. And Dr. Juma from Harvard talking about education.

So we really had standing room only. I recall 19 years ago, when I started the brain trust, we had a difficult time. We used to run in the halls and just drag people, beg them to come in. Now, unless you're there before 9 o'clock, you're not going to get a seat. So it shows that the Congressional Black Caucus, the constituency for Africa has grown very strong, and the members of the caucus are so supportive of the efforts we're doing, not only in Africa but in the Caribbean. And in Latin America, where Afro-Latinos are saying we want our share, too. We have, in Brazil now, an affirmative action program where in their colleges, they will have to admit the qualified blacks who've been ignored, and in Columbia.

So we have seen in the "hands across the ocean," as I often say, that the blood that connects us is much thicker than the water that separates us.

So with that, I will yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. JONES of Ohio. Thank you, Congressman PAYNE, from the great State of New Jersey.

I am going to close out this hour and take these last couple minutes. One of the things that you make a mistake about when you leave a Special Order is you yield to everybody, and you forget to talk about your own workshops. So very quickly, I am going to talk about the two workshops that I did. The first one was "African American Athletes: Roles, Representation, and Expectations." It was a wonderful opportunity where I had the opportunity to host Jim Brown, the former Cleveland Browns player, renowned athlete, to talk about things he has been doing around outreach and mentoring. I had Keven Davis, a partner at Garvey, Schubert & Barer, who provided an overview of how African American athletes are represented in financial transactions. Carlos Flemming, a VP of IMG, who represents Venus and Serena Williams. Everett Glenn, the president and CEO of Entertainment & Sports Plus, who is an agent. Ken Harvey, president and CEO of JAKA Consulting, a former NFL player and a representative. Jacquelyn Nance, who is the executive director of the LeBron James Family Foundation. And finally, William Rhoden, who is the author of

"Forty Million Dollar Slaves," and is a sportswriter for the New York Times. And I particularly want to thank him for taking care of the workshop while I was required to be here on the floor voting on some other issues. It was a great opportunity, and we talked about a lot of issues around African American athletes.

My second forum was focused on the declining enrollment of African Americans in law schools across the Nation. My panel consisted of Christopher Johnson of General Motors; Vanita Banks, the president-elect of the National Bar Association; John Nussbaumer, associate dean of Thomas Cooley Law School; Dwayne Murray, the Grand Polemarch of Kappa Alpha Psi; John Brittain, a lawyer from the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights; Karen Weaver, associate dean for academic affairs and diversity; and Pauline Schneider, on behalf of the ABA. She's at Orrick & Harrington.

And the quick issue around law schools is that African Americans do have a decline in enrollment and that ABA is responsible for accreditation.

So with that, Madam Speaker, I want to yield back my time and say thank you to Speaker PELOSI for giving the CBC this Special Order to focus on the ALC weekend. It's not a party; it's a legislative conference with great import for all people across the country.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, last week the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation held its 2007 Annual Legislative Conference.

Each year, I have convened the Science and Technology Braintrust. The Braintrust is a discussion forum aimed at bringing together America's brightest minds to share idea on how to diversify our science and technology workforce.

I have remained committed to hosting this Braintrust each year, because I believe that engaging young people in the fields of science and technology is one of the most important things we can do for the future success of America.

With India and China producing more than five times the number of engineers, computer scientists and information technology professions in 2005 than we did, our nation is losing its competitive edge.

The Science Committee ushered through a \$33.6 billion package of Innovation policies that are designed to help early career researchers, better train math and science teachers, and encourage industry and universities to partner with local high schools to improve science instruction.

Having a dialogue with students and with the science education community is another way to exchange ideas and assess the needs of our population.

My Braintrust consisted of two panels. The first panel consisted of high-level individuals who have risen to great heights in technology and engineering fields. They provided an executive perspective of the educational experiences that are needed for tomorrow's high-tech graduate to be globally competitive.

Panel 2 featured bright, innovative minds from individuals who work with technology in unique ways. The goal was to convince every-

one here that a career in math, science or engineering can be fulfilling, challenging and fun.

Madam Speaker, more than 150 local, African American high school students attended my Braintrust, and many of them participated in the discussion by interacting directly with the panelists.

It is my feeling that a few hearts and minds were changed that day, in the Science Committee hearing room. If only one student was influenced toward a career in science, technology, engineering or mathematics, I will be satisfied. This focus has been a major goal of my work as an elected official.

In the 1990s, we responded to the digital age with breakthroughs in computer science and information technology.

Tomorrow's greatest challenge will be to meet the needs of the Innovation Age. We must compete at a global level.

CONGRESSWOMAN EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON'S SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY BRAINTRUST—EDUCATION AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR THE DIGITAL TO INNOVATION AGE

PANEL ONE

EDUCATION AND SKILLS FOR TOMORROW'S HIGHTECH GRADUATE:

THE EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Moderator: Sam Ford, Reporter, ABC7/WJLA-TV

Panelists: Dr. Samuel Metters, CEO, Metter Industries, Inc. Mr. Scott Mills, President, BET Networks. Dr. Cheryl Shavers, CEO, Global Smarts, Inc. Mr. John Thompson, Sr. VP and General Manager, BestBuy.com.

PANEL TWO

INNOVATORS AT THE CUTTING EDGE

Moderator: Derek Lloyd, Professor and Senior Network Systems Engineer, Howard University.

Panelists: Ms. Lyn Stanfield, Strategic Relations Manager, Apple Inc. Mr. Darrell Davis, Director, DEA South Central Laboratory. Mr. Rob Garza and Mr. Eric Hilton, Thievery Corporation band. Dr. Anna McGowan, Manager, NASA Langley.

NEW FISCAL YEAR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 18, 2007, the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. It is such a pleasure to come to the floor tonight as we start a new fiscal year for the U.S. Government.

A new year is a time where you get to look back at what happened last year, where you get to redirect your focus and talk about what your priorities are going to be and the goals that you want to set.

□ 2045

Now, we all do that with our families as we get to the end of the calendar year and start the new calendar year in January. It is a time that we enjoy.

I hope for each of us, as Members of the House, as we start this fiscal year, that we will put some attention on what we spend and how we spend.

Now, Madam Speaker, over the weekend, I had the opportunity to do a town hall with some of my constituents. We